

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 206640

EXDIS, MILITARY ADDEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, TH

SUBJECT: US/THAI RELATIONS: AMBASSADOR ANAN CONVERSATION
WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB

REF: BANGKOK 14956

1. WE REGRET DELAY IN COMPLETING CLEARANCE OF REPORTS ON AMBASSADOR ANAN'S SEPTEMBER 12 CALLS ON THE SECRETARY AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB. THE FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF CONVERSATION WITH HABIB, AT WHICH HUMMEL AND DEXTER WERE ALSO PRESENT (BUT NO OTHER THAI). REPORT ON CONVERSATION WITH SECRETARY WILL BE TRANSMITTED SEPARATELY.

2. THE CONVERSATION WITH HABIB, THOUGH BILLED AS AN INTRODUCTORY CALL, PRODUCED AN HOUR-LONG REVIEW OF US/THAI RELATIONS AND AN EXPOSITION OF ANAN'S VIEWS ON VARIOUS RELATED MATTERS. ANAN WAS FORCEFUL AND FORTHRIGHT, MAKING CLEAR THAT FOR THE MOST PART HE WAS EMPHASIZING HIS OWN PERSONAL VIEWS AND NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF HIS GOVERNMENT. IT WAS EVIDENT THAT HE HAD NO INSTRUCTIONS FOR THIS MEETING. HE STRESSED THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

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(A) THE THAI NEED A MORE REALISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF WHERE THEY STAND IN THE U.S. SCHEME OF THINGS. HE FEELS THAT THAILAND IS NOT REALLY AS IMPORTANT TO THE U.S. AS THE THAI LIKE TO BELIEVE AND THIS ILLUSION LEADS TO DISAPPOINT-

MENT. AMONG ILLUSTRATIONS HE CITED THE EFFECT OF DECLINING MAP LEVELS, WHICH IS PARTICULARLY UPSETTING TO THE MILITARY.

(B) THE U.S. CAN STILL COUNT ON STRONG PRO-U.S. SENTIMENT IN THAILAND, WHERE THERE IS STILL A CONSENSUS IN FAVOR OF CONTINUING CLOSE U.S./THAI COOPERATION. HOWEVER, WE MUST CEASE TAKING THAILAND FOR GRANTED AND MUST ADJUST OUR POLICIES TO THE NEW SITUATION IN THAILAND. THIS MEANS IN PARTICULAR AVOIDING TOO CLOSE AN IDENTIFICATION WITH THE THAI MILITARY AND SHIFTING THE EMPHASIS IN OUR RELATIONS FROM MILITARY TO ECONOMIC COOPERATION.

(C) ON THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE ANAN SAID THE THAI EXPECT AND WILL ACCEPT AN INDEFINITE THOUGH REDUCED U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE, INCLUDING SPECIFICALLY OUR LONG TERM USE OF U TAPAO. HOWEVER HE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR STARTING A DIALOGUE WITH THE THAI ON THIS SUBJECT SOON. HE CONCEDED THAT THE PRESENT INTERIM GOVERNMENT IS NOT IN A POSITION TO MAKE LONG TERM COMMITMENTS ON THIS MATTER BUT URGED THAT WE BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS IT SERIOUSLY AS SOON AS A NEW ELECTED GOVERNMENT IS FORMED. HE WAS CRITICAL OF WHAT HE CONSIDERED TO BE OUR PAST PRACTICE OF TAKING FORCE REDUCTIONS UP WITH THE RTG ON A PIECEMEAL BASIS WITHOUT GENIUNE CONSULTATION AND WITHOUT REVEALING OUR LONG TERM PLANS.

(D) ON THAI INTERNAL AFFAIRS ANAN EXPRESSED FULL SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT. HE FEELS THAT POLITICALLY ACTIVE STUDENTS ARE PERFORMING A USEFUL FUNCTION AND WAS CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT LEADERS FOR VIEWING THEM NEGATIVELY, WITH ANGER AND RESENTMENT. HE SEEMED ANXIOUS ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF RESUMPTION OF POWER BY THE MILITARY BUT EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT, DESPITE CURRENT INTERNAL PROBLEMS, THEY WOULD

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NOT TRY TO TAKE OVER BEFORE THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS FORMED. HE WAS MOST APPREHENSIVE ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE MILITARY SHOULD ATTEMPT TO SEIZE POWER. THIS HE THOUGHT WOULD PROVOKE STUDENT OPPOSITION AND A VIOLENT CONFRONTATION. THIS WOULD NOT ONLY HURT THAILAND BUT ALSO SERIOUSLY EFFECT U.S. INTERESTS THERE. HE STRONGLY URGED THAT THE U.S. EXPRESS ITSELF IN FAVOR OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN THAILAND AND THOUGHT AN APPROPRIATE TIME TO

DO THIS PUBLICLY WOULD BE WHEN THE ELECTED GOVERNMENT
TAKES OFFICE (WHICH HE THOUGHT WOULD BE NEXT JANUARY OR
FEBRUARY).

3. ANAN CAME ACROSS IN THIS MEETING IN HIS USUAL FORCEFUL,

VIGOROUS, SELF-CONFIDENT MANNER. HIS VIEWS WERE FAMILIAR
FROM OUR PAST WASHINGTON CONVERSATIONS WITH HIM, AS WELL
AS FROM EMBASSY REPORT ON RECENT CONVERSATIONS IN BANGKOK.
ALTHOUGH HE SAID LITTLE THAT WAS NEW, IT WAS A USEFUL
INTRODUCTION FOR HABIB.

4. MEMCON BEING POUCHED. KISSINGER

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